

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

DECISION: EXCEPTION TO STANDING ORDERS TO MAKE A SHORT-TERM DIRECT AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SENSORY IMPAIRMENT SUPPORT SERVICES.

**DECISION OF: DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES
WITH ADVICE FROM: HEAD OF COMMISSIONING
DIRECTORATE: PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**



DECISION NO: P&C 89 (18/19 scheme)

SUBJECT: Director's Decision to make an exception to standing orders for a short-term direct award of contract for the provision of Sensory Impairment Support Services.

KEY DECISION: YES

BACKGROUND: The contract for delivery of Sensory Impairment Support is currently provided by Vision North Somerset – charity number - 1165364. The contract was for an initial three year period from the 1st January 2013 – 31st December 2015 with an option to extend for a further period of up to two years. The service provided by Vision has continued to be funded in 2018/19, however the original contract has now ended.

The contract is for the provision of services for people with a sensory impairment in North Somerset. People with a sensory impairment are defined as people who have a visual impairment (both registered and non-registered), people with a hearing impairment and people who have both a visual and hearing impairment.

The aim of the service is to enable people with a visual and/or hearing impairment to achieve the level of independence they require, to live in an accessible and safe environment and to benefit from community activities encouraging social inclusion.

North Somerset Council has a range of contracts and grants with voluntary sector organisations and these have close links to the delivery of the Council's priority outcomes. During the coming year, 2019/20, the process for awarding grants and contracts to the voluntary sector will be reviewed and the services provided under the Sensory Impairment Support contract will form part of that review.

DECISION:

To approve an exception to Standing Orders to award a short-term contract with Vision North Somerset for Sensory Impairment Support Services for the period 1st April 2019 to the 31st March 2020.

REASONS:

Under the Council's Standing Orders, 6.3 Exceptions, where a contract is below EU procurement thresholds the relevant decision maker may approve exceptions to standing orders where it is considered there are acceptable reasons to do so. The contract is within the Light Touch procurement regime thresholds and under Standing Orders a decision of this value may be made by the Director.

The direct award of a short-term contract with the current provider until the 31st March 2020 will enable the Council to complete its review of grants and contracts allocated to the voluntary sector.

It will also allow time to consult with the community and complete an equalities impact assessment. Seeking this alternative route to a tender process ensures that the most appropriate, efficient and cost-effective services are identified, and these can then be commissioned from the 1st April 2020. Under the Council's Standing Orders 6.3.1 a valid reason for exception is where a quantifiable and significant cost and efficiency savings can be achieved through seeking an alternative route.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

- The option of tendering for a new contract to deliver the same services as commissioned now, with a contract beginning 1st April 2019, was considered. This option was not considered the best route forward as it would not have allowed us to consider all the necessary evidence and strategic options available. Procuring a contract ahead of other programmed reviews, including the review of North Somerset's grant process, may have resulted in an inappropriate service and unnecessary costs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The current annual value of the Sensory Impairment Services is £165,146 per annum. The North Somerset Council cost for this 12 month short term award remains at this value and the contract costs to the Council are contained within the current budget.

Over recent years reductions have been made in the service costs.

Period	Annual cost
1 st January 2013 – 31 st March 2016	£179,000
1 st April 2016 – 31 st March 2017	£170,146, less saving of £2,500 = £167,646
1 st April 2017 – 31 st March 2018	£167,676, less saving of £2,500 = £165,146
1 st April 2018 – 31 st March 2019	£165,146

LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

Section 77(1) of the Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to establish and maintain a register of people who are ordinarily resident in their area who are sight impaired or severely sight-impaired.

We are also under a duty to maintain a voluntary register of 'disabled people' which includes children and young people under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Head of Strategic Procurement

Signed: *[Signature]*

Title: *Head of Proc.*

Date: *10 May 2019*

Head of Finance and Property

Signed: *[Signature]*

Title: *Interim Head of Finance*

Date: *10 May 2019*



An explanatory note to The Care and Support (Sight Impaired and Severely Sight Impaired Adults) Regulations 2014 we can reference for definitions at;
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/2854/pdfs/ukxiem_20142854_en_001.pdf

CONSULTATION

The current provider the Vision North Somerset have confirmed their interest in a short-term award based on the previous contract for Sensory Impairment Services.

RISK MANAGEMENT

A direct award of contract would ensure continuation of Sensory Impairment Services while an appropriate commissioning process is completed.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An equalities impact assessment will be completed prior to the recommissioning of Sensory Impairment Services.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Director's Exception to Contract Standing Orders Decision P&C 90 (18/19 scheme)

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER: Director of People and Communities

Signed: Sheila Smith

Title: Director of People & Communities

Date: 10 May 2019

WITH ADVICE FROM:

Head of Commissioning

Signed: Gerald Hart

Title: Head of Commissioning

Date: 10 May 2019